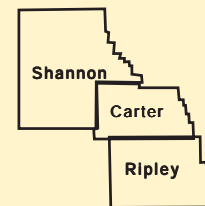




Conservation Currents



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

PROJECTS, ISSUES AND PROGRAMS IN SHANNON, CARTER AND RIPLEY COUNTIES

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

SMALLMOUTH BASS STUDY

COWS & FOREST DON'T MIX

WOODLAND RESTORATION PROJECT

ORPHANED WILDLIFE



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Current Conversations

Melanie Carden-Jessen
Conservation Education Consultant

Many of you know of the efforts to create a center on the Twin Ponds Conservation Area in Winona that will detail the forest heritage of the Missouri Ozarks. Though efforts have stalled over the past few years, assistance from the Missouri Department of Conservation has helped the project to move forward. Recently, an engineer has been retained and is working on the final plans for the site. Work should begin early to late summer 2006.

The area is 455 acres of pine, oak and hickory forest. The building is currently unfinished and needs interior plumbing and electrical work. Plans for the center and grounds include space for workshops and classes, exhibits, and a hiking trail with disabled-accessible sections. Items collected by the Forest Heritage Museum Board and transferred to the Missouri Department of Conservation for use in the center's exhibits include antique sawmill equipment, steam engines, and log cabins. Aquatic programs will be offered at the pond that borders Highway 60. The facility

will also provide outdoor skills training, information on local attractions, and brochures detailing self guided tours highlighting the Ozarks.

With just three staff to operate the site, the Missouri Department of Conservation will depend heavily on local talent and volunteers to get the center up and running. Several people have already volunteered their time to help with restoration, display, and teaching the operation of the antique machines and equipment that will be on exhibit. The area Boy Scouts are also chipping in by removing trash that has accumulated on the site.

The Twin Pines project is unique in that it is the only Conservation Department facility that focuses primarily on Ozark history and culture. An opening date has not been set, but aquatic programs and hikes could start in fall of 2006.

For more information on the facility or how you might volunteer, contact Melanie Carden-Jessen, Conservation Education Consultant at 417-256-7161.



Fisheries CURRENT RIVER SMALLMOUTH BASS STUDIES



"Growth of smallmouth is slower than most anglers may think. An 18 inch prize smallmouth may be 10 – 12 years old."



"Over 1,000 smallmouth bass were tagged during the summers of 2001 and 2002."



"Anglers reported releasing 76% of the smallmouth bass they caught."

Dave Mayers Fisheries Biologist

Many whitetail deer hunters spend countless hours observing deer and studying their habits in the hopes of gaining the edge come hunting season. Serious fishermen consider smallmouth bass the prize game fish of the Current River. However, unlike deer, smallmouth habits are not easily observed since they live underwater. That's where information gathered by fish biologists can help anglers.

Smallmouth bass get a lot of attention from conservation departments across the country. Missouri is no exception. Smallmouth have little tolerance for siltation in streams and generally occur only in streams with gravel bottoms and silt-free rocks. Smallmouth usually restrict their activity to a single stream pool but their home range can occasionally extend up to ½ mile.

In the Current River smallmouth begin nesting in early or mid-April, when water temperature exceeds 60° F. Male smallmouth guard the nest for a day or two after hatching as the fry spread away from the nest. As many as 80,000 bass fry are produced in a single mile of the Current River, but these may be reduced to less than 100 by early September of the first year of life.

Growth of smallmouth is slower than most anglers may think. Average growth is 3.5 inches during the first year. Average lengths in successive years are 6.7, 9.6, 11.4, 13.5 and 14.6 inches respectively. An 18 inch prize smallmouth may be 10 - 12 years old.

During the summers of 2001 and 2002 I had the pleasure of working with the Current River Smallmouth Bass Anglers Association on a cooperative project to learn more about the smallmouth in the Current River. This organization holds catch-and-release smallmouth fishing tournaments on the river. After the weigh-in at each tournament I was able to measure, determine condition of, and tag the smallmouth they caught. During 14 tournaments held from June to October of 2001 and 2002 I tagged just over 1,000 smallmouth, all 12 inches and larger. All fish were released at the weigh-in sites at Van Buren or Doniphan. Each fish tag had the address of our office to where anglers mailed in the tags.

During the fishing tournaments, average length of smallmouth caught was 13.6 inches. Winning tournament weight of a maximum of eight fish ranged from 9.2 - 16.1 pounds and big bass ranged from 1.7 - 3.9 pounds. Seventy-nine percent of

smallmouth weighed-in were in good condition. Tournament organizers were very careful to provide the least stressful weigh-in procedures. Plastic fish bags, tubs of water near the weigh scales, and quick weigh-in procedures helped keep fish stress to a minimum.

In the months following the tournaments many of the tagged smallmouth were caught again and anglers provided me with some interesting information. Of the 1,051 tags placed in smallmouth and released back into the river, about 20% of them were turned in by anglers as of December 2005. Smallmouth were caught from 1 - 746 days after tagging, but the average was 122 days. Based on tag returns, smallmouth bass did not move far from original release site before being caught by anglers. At Van Buren, 39% were caught less than 2 miles up or downstream, while of those released at Doniphan 28% were caught less than 1 mile up or downstream.

On average, anglers reported releasing 76% of the smallmouth bass they caught. Because all of the smallmouth tagged were of legal size (greater than or equal to 12 inches), the release of these fish was probably voluntary. Interesting though, anglers catching smallmouth bass near Doniphan released 88% of their catch compared to only 60% of the catch by anglers fishing near Van Buren. Several smallmouth were caught and released three times by different anglers all in the same year.

Local anglers made up the majority of anglers who reported catching tagged smallmouth. Anglers from Poplar Bluff accounted for 32% of the tag returns followed by Van Buren at 16% and Doniphan at 12%.

So what are some "take home points" for smallmouth anglers? Smallmouth can be caught during busy summer Saturdays—even when the river seems to have more people than fish—you just have to learn the techniques. Most anglers are local folks, and they are releasing most of the legal size smallmouth they catch, with many being caught again and again.

There are still some tagged smallmouth out there, so if you catch one with a "spaghetti-like" tag sticking out its back, it may hold some clue to better smallmouth fishing.

Wildlife

PERILS OF A SWIMMING FAWN



Dan Dreese
Wildlife Management Biologist

Two years ago, while camping at Circle B campground in late June, I witnessed a dramatic event on the bank of the Jack's Fork River. It was late

evening, that magical time of the day when the fish often bite well and warier creatures reclaim their right to the riverbank. Upstream, a large doe calmly and deliberately started crossing a swift part of the river, followed by her small fawn.

Halfway across the river the little fawn was overwhelmed by the strong current and swept rapidly downstream. Its mother stood watching from the far bank, seemingly unconcerned. My 25 years of training and experience as a wildlife biologist reassured me that the struggling fawn would be fine, but as the tiny bobbing fawn came closer to my campsite I had a powerful urge to wade out and rescue it.

A forestry buddy of mine and his wife were visiting our camp and were also observing the struggles of the swimming fawn. I felt further compelled to rescue the little fawn. Wouldn't these friends think I was a frozen-hearted jerk if I (the professional wildlife biologist) didn't respond to the fawn's need of a rescue?

My heart was screaming, "Rescue the poor little fawn!" My experience was quietly but firmly telling me, "No. The fawn is better off on its own." I watched anxiously as the thrashing little fawn sped by our campsite in the rapid water, knowing that the firm "little voice of experience" was almost always right. Inside, however, I felt great apprehension and guilt. What if the "little voice of experience" was wrong this time? What if the fast current swept the little fawn under the logjam downstream?

I would not be able to help in time if the fawn needed rescuing now. I had left the little fawn to the mercy of Mother Nature, with no guarantee that she would be merciful. Swiftly the river carried away the helpless fawn, until it finally dumped the fawn in a back-eddy 100 yards downstream. The fawn was now on the same side of the current as its mother.

Exhausted, the little fawn swam to shore and slowly walked onto the large gravel bar that formed the centerpiece of the campground. Now the possibility of a new horror became apparent to me. What if some camper's dog attacked the fawn? What if other campers saw the fawn and "rescued it", assuming it was orphaned or abandoned by its mother? I thought that at least if I had "rescued" the fawn it would have been quickly turned loose to find its mother. What would happen now?

Luckily for the spunky little fawn, there was a small but thick patch of willow sprouts close to shore. The fawn walked straight to the small willow thicket and lay down. We watched apprehensively in the last minute of twilight as the shroud of descending darkness gave the fawn added protection. To our surprise and delight, no humans came to the little fawn's rescue.

I assume that later that night when the camp fires died down to tiny flames and glowing embers the doe found her fawn with a call that it would know. In my mind they would touch noses, she would lick her fawn generously, and the fawn would suckle eagerly. By teaching the fawn to cross rivers the doe had given it a lesson on how to evade dogs and predators that would someday soon be capable of following its scent.

If the fawn had drowned, perhaps it would have ensured that only the strongest individuals go on to breed (or that only the offspring of the "best" parents survive to reproduce), and in this way the health of the whole deer herd is improved. Maybe it would just mean that a good doe and a good fawn had a bad evening.

The death of young animals, whether by natural or human causes, is always a hard thing to witness. I am thankful that I saw the fawn find cover. However, I am also thankful for the knowledge that nothing ever goes to waste in nature. Scavengers depend on the death of others to give them life.

A fawn pinned under a log jam would have fed many turtles and countless crayfish. In turn, many of the crayfish would end up as food for small-mouth bass and perhaps the state-endangered hellbender. The web of life is both complex and messy. The laws of nature do not always conform to our desires.

This spring if you are faced with an animal rescue opportunity, please don't. Wild animals must live



"Halfway across the river the little fawn was overwhelmed by the strong current and swept rapidly downstream."



"Wild animals must live under the laws of nature, even in a natural world highly altered by humans."

"Instead of rescuing individual animals it is much more important to ensure that all wildlife have wild places to maintain viable populations."

under the laws of nature, even in a natural world highly altered by humans. Some volunteer wildlife rehabilitators have the training, facilities, and licenses to care for truly orphaned wildlife, but such "private wildlife rescue centers" are typically only staffed in major metropolitan areas.

Wildlife caregivers are especially valuable when rare or endangered wildlife need assistance. However, the average person is better off not intervening in wildlife rescue. Instead of rescuing individual animals it is much more important to ensure that all wildlife have wild places to maintain viable populations. Fortunately for all of us, the Current River area still abounds in wild places.



Private Lands

TREES AND COWS? A "SILVIPASTURE" APPROACH



"There are very good reasons to keep cattle out of the forest to benefit both the forest and cattle."

Mike Gaskins Private Lands Conservationist

Do cattle and trees mix? It's important to note the difference between trees grown for a specific purpose, or as a crop, and trees grown in a forest. There are very good reasons to keep cattle out of the forest to benefit both the forest and cattle. Cattle cause significant damage to certain valuable trees such as white oak and red oak. Above ground damage can be seen on tree trunks where cattle rub against them. Most damage, however, occurs, unseen below ground as cattle trample the sensitive root systems of valuable trees. The impact on the roots tends to be greatest during the wetter months of spring, fall and winter.

Soil compaction from cattle decreases the ability of the soil to soak up water, impairs tree growth, and prevents or reduces growth of new tree seedlings. In the forest, cattle eat acorns, seedlings, and sprouts that are needed to grow and replace the trees that are becoming mature. Cattle that spend time in the forest tend not to gain as much weight due to the lower quality forage on the forest floor. Cattle that feed on acorns in the fall suffer sickness and decreased calving rates. The few benefits for having cattle in the woods, such as shade in the summer months, often don't outweigh the losses both to cattle production and valuable forest land.

Silvipasture is a technique landowners can use to integrate growing trees, raising cattle, and providing habitat for wildlife on the same piece of land. The benefits can be real and rewarding with a little planning and work. In the Ozarks, the most adapted and easily applied silvipasture approach includes grazing cattle in a specifically spaced shortleaf pine plantation with a ground cover of warm and/or cool season grasses. One of the

most important things to keep in mind about the silvipasture system is that it is a purely agricultural system. Silvipasture is grazing cattle amongst a row crop of future salable pine trees, NOT turning cattle loose in the woods. Silvipasture works best when applied in a rotational grazing system. Cattle can utilize the benefits of high quality and highly productive native warm season grasses in the hot summer months as well as the shade of the properly spaced crop trees. In the winter, the pine trees serve as wind shelters with a mixture of orchard grass and clover for grazing during the cooler months. Silvipasture is not applied on all acres, but rather on suitable areas of the farm as a key part of the whole grazing system.

If you would like more information on how you could benefit from silvipasture, or you would like to talk about other ways to improve wildlife habitat, forest health, and timber production, feel free to email or give us a call.



"Silvipasture works best when applied in a rotational grazing system."



Forestry

PINE-OAK WOODLAND RESTORATION PROJECT



Gary Gognat Resource Forester

Resource managers are developing over 1200 acres of pine-oak woodland habitat on Rocky Creek Conservation Area northeast of Winona. This woodland

community type was once very common in our area of the Ozarks. What is a woodland? The partial canopy, open understory, and diverse ground flora are what really characterize the woodland community. Typically, woodlands have a sparse understory of shrubs and small trees and a dense ground flora rich in native wildflowers and grasses. Tree heights range from 20 to 80 feet depending on the site fertility and trees often have wide spreading branches, especially on dry sites. Characteristic tree species in woodlands include post oak, shortleaf pine, black oak, white oak, and black hickory. Understory and shrub species include service berry, farkleberry, sassafras, and southern black haw.

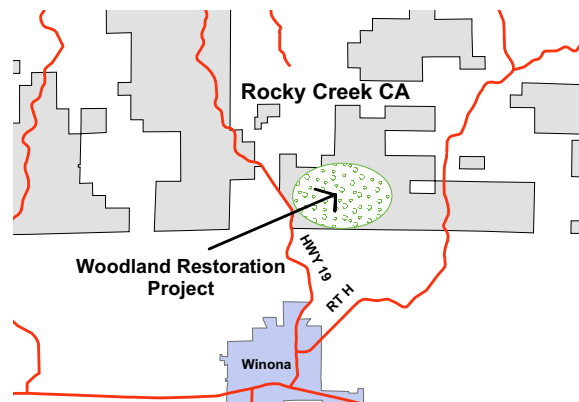
The open understory of woodlands allows sunlight to reach the ground, where it promotes a dense ground flora of grasses, sedges, legumes, and composites that include asters, goldenrod, and blazing stars. Unlike forest communities, where ground flora like wildflowers peak in the spring before the trees put on leaves and light becomes limited, woodland ground flora develops throughout the growing season. Summer and fall blooming wildflowers and grasses are abundant. Common woodland ground flora species include little bluestem, big bluestem, bristly sunflower, dittany, bush clovers, wild quinine, tick clovers, and many others.

Species richness and biodiversity are often unparalleled and produce many benefits for wildlife as well as for humans. In fact, a high quality woodland site of only a few hundred acres may harbor more than 300 different plant species. Unfortunately, fire suppression, historic large-scale timber harvests, and unrestricted open-range grazing has resulted in widespread woodland degradation and species loss over time.

The Rocky Creek Conservation Area restoration project began in a mixed oak - pine forest that was overstocked. The area contains stands of shortleaf pine that were seeded in the early 1960's, as well as many oak and hickories that regenerated after early harvests around the turn of the century. Scattered throughout the project area

are large post oaks that are 150 to 200 years old. These remnant trees were part of the early woodlands. The project area was thinned with timber harvests to create gaps in the canopy so sunlight could reach the ground. Harvesting also created a 'woodland structure', as described above, and allowed managers to select canopy species most suited to the land.

Prescribed fire is essential to maintain the woodland project. Prescribed burns are scheduled as part of the management activities. The first burns will remove part of the leaf litter and slash from the harvest activities. Amazingly, seeds of the many different herbaceous plant species that were prevalent long ago are laying dormant in the soil right now. Allowing more sunlight to reach ground, by removing the leaf litter and some forest overstory, will help restore the rich plant community. Forest products will also continue to be removed to facilitate habitat restoration and management as the restoration project continues to develop.



Did You Know?.....

A cord of wood (a stack of wood 4' x 4' x 8') can produce any of the following:

- 7,500,000 toothpicks
- 1,000 to 2,000 pounds of paper
- 942 one-pound books
- 61,370 standard business envelopes
- 4,384,000 postage stamps
- 460,000 personal checks
- 89,870 sheets of bond stationery
- 1,200 *National Geographic* magazine
- 3,600 *Current Wave Newspaper*
- 250 Sunday *New York Times*

"Typically, woodlands have a sparse understory of shrubs and small trees and a dense ground flora rich in native wildflowers and grasses."



"Scattered throughout the project area are large post oaks that are 150 to 200 years old."



"Prescribed fire is essential to maintain the woodland project."

Education

WILD ANIMALS DON'T MAKE GOOD PETS



Jennifer Ferris
Conservation Education Consultant

Being a parent, classroom teacher, and now an education consultant, I have had many opportunities to share my passion for the natural world with children. I also happen to be a true advocate of hands-on learning and realize the excitement, interest, and value of these experiences. But I also know that I am a role model to the children and families that I touch and I have always been a proponent of the rule that wild animals belong in the wild.

One way to allow learning is through observation of a wild critter for a short period of time. If a child does bring an animal home, then be a role-model, assist with the animal's safe release into its original natural environment.

There are many reasons that wild animals do not make good pets. For one thing, wild animals, if they are to survive in captivity, often require specialized care. Without such care, they will remain in poor health and many die. Animals are better off in their natural habitats where they are free to reproduce interact with their own species. Wild animals may carry ticks, mites, fleas, worms, or other diseases that could be transmitted to humans. Take the time to explain to children the importance of returning wildlife to the wild— it is a lesson they will remember for life. The following is poem, good for children and adults alike:

WHERE THE WILD
THINGS SHOULDN'T BE
Beverly Armstrong

How would you like to live in a cage
That was just about ten feet square,
With no toys to play with and nothing to do,
Just you and a bed and a chair?

Oh, sure you'd be fed (the same thing each day)
You'd have water (unless they forgot)
And since you would never be going outside,
You wouldn't get cold, or too hot

But oh, you'd be lonely, just sitting alone
With no one to talk to all day.
You'd remember the trees, and the grass and the breeze,
The places where you used to play.

You'd remember your friends, you'd remember the sky,
And games and strawberries and sun,
And you'd know you could never go skating again
Or go swimming, or ride bikes, or run.

You'd get mad and scream, and throw things around;
You'd kick and you'd pound on the wall.
And your owners would scold you, and say to themselves,
"He isn't a nice pet at all!"

The more you got mad, the less they would like you,
The less they'd remember to care
About if you had water or if you got fed
Or if you were lonely in there.

And then you would know what it's like to be kept
As a pet when you're meant to be free,
And you'd listen when wild things are trying to say
"Please don't make a pet out of me."

If keeping a wild animal as a pet still seems tempting, realize that it is illegal to possess many wild animals without a state or federal permit. See the Wildlife Code of Missouri or speak with your local conservation agent for details.



"There are many reasons that wild animals do not make good pets."



"If wild animals are to survive in captivity, they often require specialized care."

Protection

ORPHANED AND INJURED WILDLIFE



Scott Stephens
Conservation Agent

Spring is the time of year when everyone starts thinking about getting back into the woods. The trees are beginning to bud, the forest and grassland flowers begin to bloom, and newborn wildlife begin their journey. While we are out and about many of us may come across some of these young and "seemingly" helpless critters. They may look like they are all alone but most of the time they are not. Before thinking about taking a wild animal as a pet just remember, you can take the ani-

mal out of the wild, but you can't take the wild out of the animal. In addition, it is illegal.

What is an orphaned animal? A bird on the ground that cannot fly yet? A litter of raccoons whose eyes are still closed and they are alone in their den tree? A young hairless squirrel on the ground next to a tree, screaming for help? A litter of cottontail rabbits with no mother in sight? A fawn lying in the middle of a field?

Alone, but not necessarily orphaned in all the

Continued on page 7

above cases. These situations could be perfectly normal. Wildlife parents have to leave their young alone for several hours daily to forage for food. Birds feed their young on the ground the last 1 to 2 weeks before they're ready to fly. The young squirrel's cries for help are a way for the mother to locate him. Once located, squirrels can retrieve their young that fall from the nest. **Remember, the best thing to do is leave the animal alone, leave the area, and allow nature to take its course.**

In today's world, wild animals face a wide variety of challenges that threaten their survival. There are several things we can do as humans to help wildlife from becoming injured. The best way to help wildlife is prevention. **Never throw trash or food or ANYTHING out of your car window!!**

Thousands of Birds of Prey and other animals are killed or severely injured each year from food and food wrappers being thrown out on the side of roads, highways, and interstates. Small prey species such as mice and rats are drawn to these wrappers in search of food; Birds of Prey feed on these animals. Often, the Bird of Prey is so tuned into the possible meal that they do not notice oncoming traffic and will swoop down to get the small animal riffling in the trash and end up being hit by an oncoming car. Due to their large size more times than not the bird of prey becomes

injured rather than killed. Many other scavenger animals such as opossums, raccoons, groundhogs, bears, and many others also wind up dead or injured on the world's roadways as a result of trash and food being tossed out of car windows along roadways.

Cats kill millions of Songbirds every year! To help protect songbirds from your cat please either keep them inside or put bells on them to warn birds of their presence. With a bell on their collar cats are unable to sneak up on unsuspecting birds.

If you have questions about an animal that may be in need of assistance, leave it alone and call your Conservation Department office.

"In today's world, wild animals face a wide variety of challenges that threaten their survival."



"Wildlife parents have to leave their young alone for several hours daily to forage for food."



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting

Coyote
Squirrel
Turkey (Spring)
Turkey (Youth)

Opens

5/9/05
5/27/06
4/24/06
4/8/06

Closes

3/31/06
2/15/07
5/14/06
4/9/06

Fishing

Black Bass (impoundments)
Black Bass (streams, Current Jacks Fork and their tributaries)
Trout Management Areas
Trout Parks
Snagging Nongame Fish (streams)

Opens

Open All Year
5/27/06
Open All Year
3/1/06
3/15/06

Closes

2/28/07

10/31/06
5/31/06

Resident Hunting Permit

Prices

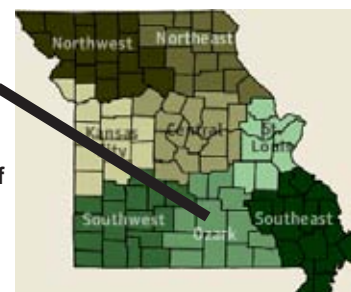
Hunting and Fishing --- \$19
Small Game --- \$10
Youth Deer and Turkey ---\$17
Archery Hunting ---\$19
Firearms Any Deer ---\$17
Firearms First Bonus Deer --- \$7
Firearms Second Bonus Deer --- \$7
Fall Firearms Turkey ---\$13
Spring Turkey --- \$17
Trapping --- \$10

Resident Fishing Permit Prices

Hunting and Fishing --- \$19
Fishing --- \$12
Trout --- \$7



We are on the web. To view this newsletter go to www.mdc.mo.gov and click on the Ozark portion of the map located at the bottom of web page.



We're on the Web!
WWW.CONSERVATION.STATE.MO.US



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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West Plains, MO 65775
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2901 W. Truman Blvd.
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MDC Mission

- To protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state,
- To serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities,
- To provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about fish, forest, and wildlife resources.

Mission of This Newsletter

The mission of this newsletter is to share current information about conservations projects, issues, and programs and to develop working relationships with the citizens of Shannon, Carter, and Ripley Counties.

Share Your Thoughts

If there are any subjects you would like to see in the *Conservation Currents* please contact Scott Stephens or have any questions pertaining to the Wildlife Code please contact the Conservation Agent assigned to your county. County assignments and phone numbers are listed below.

Operation Game Thief and Operation Forest Arson

Sponsored by the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the Missouri Dept. of Conservation and the U.S. Forest Service

Phone: 1-800-392-1111

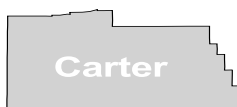
CONTACT OFFICES AND NAMES

If you have a question about any of the following topics, here are your contact professionals:

Shannon Co. Field Office
573/226-3616



Carter Co. Field Office
573/323-8515



Ripley Co. Field Office
573/996-2557



Forestry

Gary Gognat 573/226-3616
Terry Thompson 573/226-3616

Forestry

Clint Dalbom 573/226-3616

Forestry

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Kim Houf 573/323-4249
Rhonda Rimer 417/256-7161

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Fisheries

Dave Mayers 417/256-7161

Fisheries

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Fisheries

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Conservation Education

Melanie Carden-Jensen 417/256-7161

Conservation Education

Melanie Carden-Jensen 417/256-7161

Conservation Education

Melanie Carden-Jensen 417/256-7161

Outdoor Skills

Larry Lindeman 417/256-7161

Outdoor Skills

Larry Lindeman 417/256-7161

Outdoor Skills

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